

PPY H673.1774576 G721p 1967 C.1  
Pennsylvania Historical  
Commission.

Governor Printz Park,  
Morton Homestead

PENNSYLVANIA TRAIL OF HISTORY



# GOVERNOR PRINTZ PARK

# MORTON HOMESTEAD

---

Two Historic Remains of  
Swedish Settlement before  
Pennsylvania's Founding

---

*Administered by*  
THE PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL  
AND MUSEUM COMMISSION

PENNSYLVANIA STATE LIBRARY  
OCT 3 - 1967

Thirty-eight years before William Penn and his English Friends established Pennsylvania, Johan Printz, the royal governor of New Sweden, planted his seat of authority on Tinicum Island. Today this old capitol is an archeological remain at Governor Printz Park on the *Pennsylvania Trail of History* in Essington Township, Delaware County.

New Sweden was the first European settlement in what is now Pennsylvania. Founded in 1638 at present-day Wilmington, Delaware, it was the only Swedish colony in the New World. Here the "Kalmar Nyckel" and the "Vogel Grip," after a long winter at sea, disembarked a weary band of Swedish soldiers sent by the New Sweden Company. Here, in March, they erected an outpost, Fort Christina, named to honor their young queen.

The purpose of the venture was fur trade with the Indians and the establishment of a settlement to handle this trade. Colonization, such as the earlier settlement of families in Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Virginia, or the later settlement of Pennsylvania, was not the intention of the Swedes, nor of the Dutchmen who played a prominent role in this venture.

Sweden was newly a power in European politics in the early seventeenth century and was taking its first hesitating steps into the rising competition for markets and raw materials around the world. Willem Usselinx, promoter of the Dutch West India Company, tried persistently to interest the Swedish government and private investors in a similar venture in the New World, but he received little more than unfulfilled promises.

In the 1630's other Swedes and Dutchmen took up the idea, including Peter Minuit, once director of the Dutch trading colony of New Netherland (later New York), investors were secured, and the New Sweden Company chartered.

Minuit was placed in charge of the expedition and was to serve as its leader in the New

World. His instructions were to lay claim to the west shore of the South (Delaware) River between what is now Christiana Creek, Delaware, and Trenton, New Jersey, and to purchase the land from the Indians. The backers hoped for a profit from the beaver pelts to be obtained from the Indians in trade and the tobacco to be purchased for liquor and wines in the West Indies. In this regard the first expedition was a failure.

In 1640 under Peter Ridder, new settlers arrived, some of them Dutchmen. Though woe-fully short of skilled hands, dwellings and farm buildings were erected south of what is now Philadelphia, land was cleared, and fields prepared.

It was difficult to find people interested in living in the new colony. Many who were sent were soldiers. Ships returning to Sweden carried back people who were through with the venture. Hoping to supplement the meager population, the Swedish government deported minor lawbreakers, wandering Finns caught poaching on forbidden lands or destroying timber, or soldiers who had deserted.

In 1643 the first royal governor, Johan Printz, stepped from his ship with instructions from the new bosses, the Council of State, to make New Sweden show a profit. Printz was an imposing man, tall, 400 pounds, tough, blustering, dictatorial. He ordered the clearing of more land for agriculture, intensified the cultivation of tobacco, stepped up the beaver trade, and asserted the Swedish claim to a large trading area. The



*Remains of Printzhof*

Dutch, situated at Fort Nassau across the Delaware, maintained a cool if correct relationship with Printz, particularly in view of English ambitions for trade in the same area.

Printz expanded the area of settlement by planting his house, Printzhoff, which served as a government building, and a fortification up the Delaware on Tinicum Island. Several families settled nearby to work the land. A great fire swept the settlement in the winter of 1645 and there was great suffering because of the bitterness of the season.

The Printzhoff was reconstructed, a two-story log structure built so that it could be defended from attack. Lumber shipped from Sweden was used for the interior, and two or more fireplaces with chimneys were constructed of brick. Glass was used for the windows. The house provided considerable comfort for Printz and his wife. Records show that his library and his draperies were valued at a considerable sum.

Active trading along the Delaware warmed the rivalry between the Swedes and Dutch. At first circumspect in their relations with one another, the Dutch in time became more hostile. This was not uncongenial to the strong-willed Governor Printz, a professional cavalry officer who had served in the Thirty Years War. Claims and counterclaims were matched by charges and countercharges. Peter Stuyvesant, governor of New Netherland, was as strong-willed as Printz. Stuyvesant finally decided to challenge Printz' predominance on the Delaware by constructing Fort Casimir at what is now New Castle.

Printz had by now despaired of receiving adequate support and sufficient settlers from home. He gave up his command in October, 1653, and returned to Sweden.

His successor, Johan Rising, rashly seized Stuyvesant's fort in the following year, a deed that was answered the next year by Stuyvesant's seizure of the Swedish colony. The inhabitants, however, were allowed to continue their accustomed way of life.

The site of Johan Printz' "capital" was ex-



cavated by archeologists in the 1930's. The charred remains of logs were evidence of the great fire. The rebuilt main structure, considerably larger, was placed partially on the spot where the first had burned. A possible site of the powder magazine, where the fire started from an explosion, was found, a deep cone-shaped hole with small bricks upon which glass had been fused by tremendous heat. Many Indian relics were also found, indicating the trade relations which the Swedes maintained with the Indians.

## MORTON HOMESTEAD

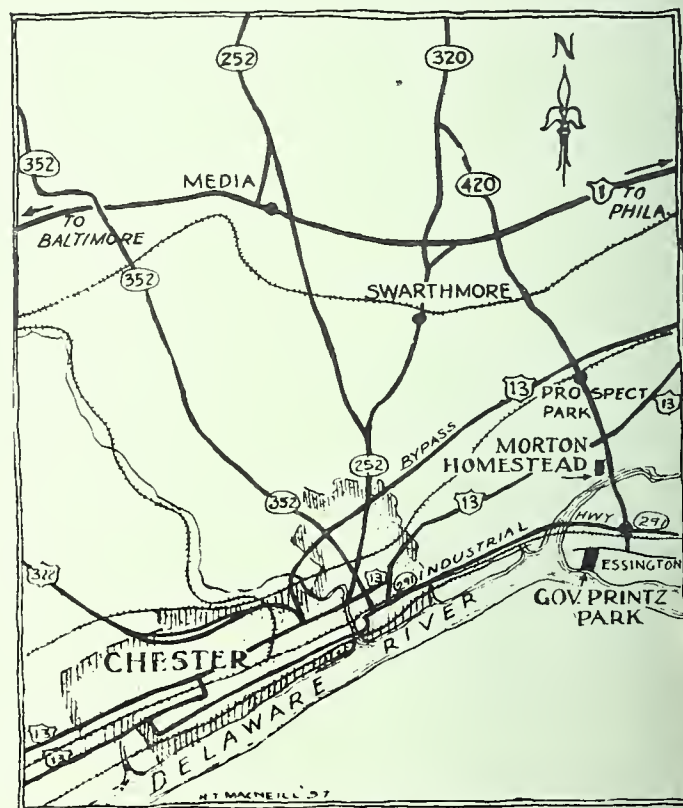
About a mile north of Governor Printz Park in Prospect Park Borough, the Morton Homestead stands on the bank of Darby Creek. Here an ancient log and stone structure, now restored, gives the visitor an insight into the lives and a look at the building methods of the Swedish and Finnish settlers of the Delaware region. The log cabins which these people first introduced into America were to accompany and symbolize the conquest of the wilderness as the frontier moved westward.

The original portion of the Morton Homestead may well be the oldest surviving structure in Pennsylvania. Made of logs, it was built sometime in mid-seventeenth century by Morton Mortonson, great-grandfather of John Morton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence from



*Morton House*

Pennsylvania. About 1698 a second log house was built close by for Mortonson's son Mathias and family. Later the intervening space was enclosed with walls of stone for added strength, and eventually a continuous roof covered the entire long, narrow structure.



### *Visiting Hours*

#### MORTON HOMESTEAD

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME: 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.  
weekdays except Monday; 1:00 to 5:00 P.M.  
Sunday.

WINTER: 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. weekdays except Monday; 1:00 to 4:30 P.M. Sunday.  
Hours subject to change.

Telephone: Prospect Park, Code 215, 532-3060

#### GOVERNOR PRINTZ PARK

Open during daylight hours.

Telephone: Essington, Code 215, 586-7292.